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ABSTRACT

A well-planned, effective inservice program should include the following criteria: long-range preparation involving all staff, follow-up supportive services, focus on teachers' stated needs, cooperation of teachers and teacher educators in discovering how teachers can continue to grow, development of knowledge about resources and necessary research skills, and recognition of the teacher as the instructional expert. These criteria are being followed in an on-going inservice program by Michigan State University and Wainwright School in Lansing, Michigan. The program consists of four phases, emphasizes cooperation among team members (teachers, graduate interns, and teacher educators), and, at the end of the second year, is still being implemented and evaluated. (JH)

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SESSION: Teacher In-Service: An Alternative Through Research and Literature

TEACHER IN-SERVICE: AN ALTERNATIVE THROUGH RESEARCH AND LITERATURE

The purpose of this paper is to examine a framework for teacher in-service programs in reading. As a means of examining the proposed framework, I will discuss an on-going in-service program that is being pursued by Michigan State University and Wainwright School in Lansing, Michigan. A description of the MSU-Wainwright program provides examples of criteria that can be used in developing quality in-service reading programs for teachers.

Too often, in-service programs are considered worthless by teacher educators who complain that the teachers only want gimmicks and by teachers who complain that in-service instruction is irrelevant or meaningless. The problem that exists is related to teachers and teacher educators having difficulty reaching a common consensus about the needs and purposes of in-service and professional development programs.

A communication gap exists whereby teachers and teacher educators cannot concur on the relevant reading issues that are presented in the literature and research. As Fillion explains, teachers want solutions to immediate problems whereas teacher educators look more to the long-run or specific research issues which contribute to theory (4).

Adequately planned and thorough in-service programs can unite the theoretical concerns of the teacher educators and the practical needs of the teachers. Therefore, through an examination of the criteria that I will present, in-service and professional development programs can be developed in which relevant reading issues can be presented through an exploration of research and literature.

I have often read and heard that teachers are unfamiliar with the variety of scholarly, professional resources available and are not able adequately to read research findings. In fact, an administrator in charge of staff development looked me squarely in the eye and said, "They (teachers) just don't know anything."

Can that statement be true? I think not. The blame for the problem should not be placed totally on the teachers shoulders. To me, we are all at fault: teachers; teacher educators; administrators; or whoever plans, presents, directs, and evaluates in-service programs because we are not able to work in a partnership where goals, interests, and needs are fully articulated. By working together, in-service programs can become more rewarding and beneficial.

Before describing the MSU-Wainwright program, I must air my biases concerning in-service teacher education, particularly in reading. Because I have been on both sides of the podium, I can empathize with teachers who must sit and listen to a speaker deliver a two-hour sermon on the reading gospel in a "one-shot visit" to a school district. Although such programs are often labeled in-service or professional development, they rarely serve or develop anyone.

Therefore, my biases relate to poorly planned in-services, which try to do something to teachers, not for teachers or with teachers. As I see professional development for teachers, it is a long-range continuous development in which a partnership exists between the teachers and the teacher educators. However, partnership is not enough to provide a meaningful in-service. quality in-service programs must be on-going and supportive. By on-going and supportive, I mean that an in-service program should involve long-range planning, coordination and support as prescribed by Baden (1). Therefore, I am biased against those on-day-a-year in-service programs that leave everyone dissatisfied.

As an outgrowth of the long-range planning concept, teachers need to articulate their concerns and needs. Teachers find in-service programs beneficial if they are tailor-made to assist them in solving their current problems. Baden points out that a needs assessment is an important part of an in-service program (1). Too often in-service training or other educational programs are planned without consulting the teachers. Wolcott refers to the procedure as "doing to

teachers instead of for teachers" (9). Thus, another personal bias surfaces -- teachers must perceive the in-service program as meeting their needs. Fillion is more specific by saying that teachers need solutions to problems so they can "act now" (4).

Active involvement of the teachers must go beyond the planning stage, which can be considered a bias. Teachers need to be continuously involved in the process of information gathering, dissemination, and evaluation. Baden says personal involvement enhances growth (1). Total involvement goes beyond learning specific content knowledge, as it is the development of a process model to be used for solving future problems and acquiring new knowledge.

I am also biased against the limited use of varieties of professional resources and research by teachers. Too often, the experts and lecturers give information to teachers without allowing teachers to become familiar with varieties of points of view expressed in available professional resources. Unfortunately, teachers are not aware of all the resources at their disposal. Baden believes that teachers need to be taught to use available resources (1). Besides resources, in-service programs need to help teachers develop research skills. Fillion contends that teachers do not use research because it is not in their journals and they have not been trained to understand it (4). According to Kaplan, a way of training teachers to utilize research is to assist them in examining the possibilities of doing action research (6). Action research can help teachers solve problems by applying research techniques, utilizing knowledge gained from research, and evaluating the state of knowledge (1, 4, 6).

Finally, I believe that it is the teacher who is the crucial instructional variable. Research and literature substantiate my opinion (2, 3, 7, 8). Furthermore, it is the teacher's personal understanding or belief about reading instruction that influence pupil growth (2, 3). Therefore, in-service programs should not be geared to some ~~ex~~trinsic motivating device, but to a commitment of the

professional and personal growth and development of the teachers.

From my biases, six criteria for successful in-service programs can be developed. The following criteria provide a framework for quality in-service programs:

1. An in-service program should be long range with total staff involvement in planning, coordinating, implementing, and evaluating.
2. Follow-up supportive services should be provided.
3. The program must be geared to the articulated needs of the teachers.
4. There should be active involvement on behalf of the teachers working in partnership with the teacher trainers to discover a process by which teachers can continue to grow.
5. Varieties of resources and research information should be available for developing knowledge of resources and acquiring research skills.
6. Throughout in-service training, the teacher must be regarded as an instructional expert, as the teacher is the key variable in any instructional episode.

Examples of the six criteria can be seen in an examination of the MSU-Wainwright Reading In-Service Program.

Description of the MSU-Wainwright Reading In-Service Program

The participants in the MSU-Wainwright In-Service Program were charged with the completion of a three-fold task. First, the participants were to examine the current problems of the teachers and search for solutions. The second part of the task was to develop skills that could be employed to solve future problems. The final and major component of the task was to develop an innovative reading program which drew upon available research data to complete the task. The project went through four phases which will be described in this paper. 3

Phase I. The Reading Development Team (RDT), which consisted of a group of teachers, graduate interns, and teacher educators, articulated their perceived

reading needs along with their conceptions of the reading process and of reading instruction. To substantiate their views of the reading process and of reading instruction, the RDT searched the literature. In this initial phase, foundations were being laid for meeting some of the previously cited criteria which were as follows: there was a partnership, teachers were totally involved, needs were articulated, and varieties of resources were being used. The teachers and teacher educators were involved in an on-going dialogue regarding the reading process and reading instruction. By attempting to substantiate their views, the participants examined varieties of professional resources. At the school, many professional journals, books, and monographs were made available to the participants along with The First Handbook on Research on Teaching, The Second Handbook on Research on Teaching, and The Encyclopedia of Education Research. Small groups of the in-service participants went to the MSU libraries and were taught to use E.R.I.C. and various abstracts and indices. For some of the teachers, it was the first time they had an opportunity to use a variety of library research tools.

From the discussions and literature searches, a three-pronged view of the reading process was developed. First, focusing on the language process and interest, the view of reading emphasizes instruction that develops children who read for information and enrichment. Second, reading skills are to be developed as a means to an end in a hierarchical fashion. Third, children need assistance in transferring the learning of skills to meaningful reading material (7).

After identifying and substantiating a view of the reading process, the team began the second phase of in-service.

Phase II. In phase two, members of the developmental team began to create an innovative reading program, which was their original task. Armed with their three-pronged view of reading, the participants began to examine commercial

reading materials. This was very significant as teachers often must use materials without thoroughly investigating the underlying beliefs of the authors. It was their contention that certain aspects of a variety of programs could be compiled into one program.

While investigating existing reading materials, the participants began to search the research literature to give them direction. From their view of reading and the research, they developed a hierarchy of skills which was a modification and compilation of several existing hierarchies. Using Harris' "diagnostic teacher" as a frame of reference, they incorporated three types of diagnostic testing in the program (7). The three types of diagnostic information to be gained from testing were as follows: diagnosis of specific skill needs, diagnosis of reading levels, and diagnosis of attitudes and interests (7).

O'Connel's statement that organization and management are the key to a successful reading program, led the participants to investigate overall management plans. Specifically, the Lansing School District has its own objectives and utilizes several skills management systems (7). The procedure allows the teachers to investigate alternatives and develop personal, workable systems which have a basis in Fillion's applicative and associative uses of research knowledge (4).

In an effort to find research data that would give insight into specific instructional procedures, the participants examined information primarily in the fields of psychology and educational psychology. Thus, reading was examined in a broader perspective. The participants concluded from their investigations that teaching had to be an active process, reading must be taught, and pupil needs and self-concept played an integral part in the instructional process. Finally, they concluded that the instruction must be done in a systematic manner.

From the investigation of reading materials and research data, the RDT began phase three and phase four.

Phase III. In phase three, the teachers with the aid and support of the teacher educators are gradually implementing the program in their classrooms. Each teacher is implementing the program according to pupil needs.

Phase IV. The fourth phase of the in-service program is evaluation, which is an on-going integral part of the entire procedure. The process is close to Fillion's description of school-controlled, school-based, and school-oriented research (4).

Through their participation in the in-service program, the teachers are developing skills that will help them tackle future problems and continue to gain knowledge in reading as they are now more aware of the varieties of resources available to them and are more competent in using research. They now have a model for looking at the instructional needs of children as well as the content area in developing classroom instruction strategies.

Framework for In-service Programs

The framework of an in-service program that I presented through a description of the MSU-Wainwright program relies on a partnership between teachers and teacher educators. Through the partnership, channels of communication can be opened which allow the teachers to identify their needs and search for answers to their problems.

After the teachers identify their problems and concerns, the teacher educators work with the teachers looking for solutions. Solutions can be provided for problems like Fillion's "act now" dilemmas and for future problems (4). Specifically, the solutions can be derived from existing literature or action research carried on by the teachers with the aid of the teacher educators.

When the Wainwright teachers created their program, it was a skills management system. I am not saying that by following my procedure you, too, can create a skills management system. For the teachers at Wainwright, it appears to be a solution to their specific, instructional problems, but it has yet to stand the test of time. The teachers are still implementing and evaluating the program. Therefore, the following two important aspects of an in-service program come to the fore:

1. The in-service programs must meet the needs of the teachers.
2. The programs must be long range with built-in evaluation procedures.

Throughout the program, the teachers were always valuable co-instructors. After examining the literature, research, or existing programs, they would share their information. Their growth truly resulted from sharing information with the other members of the developmental team and staff members not involved with the in-service program. The RDT has become a core of "demonstration teachers" who are now called upon to share expertise with other teachers throughout the district.

At the close of the second year, the in-service program is not complete, as it follows the principle of continuous professional development for teachers. The development arises from the existing partnership between the teachers and teacher educators and the information gathering skills that the teachers developed.

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